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OREGON OPERATIONS OFFICE

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EPA-REGION 10

U.S. EPA  
ATTN: Harbor Comments  
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Portland, OR 97205

I am retired now, but for 23 years, I worked at the Columbia Slough at a dry dock for pleasure craft. I was on the Willamette River all the time, and I know it very well. I was born and raised here in Portland, and I think the river is a whole lot cleaner now than it was when I was growing up. Back then, they were floating logs down it and doing other things that polluted it. Environmental laws were less strict then. I remember there was a sand and gravel business that did excavation right by the river. It was eventually shut down and had to pay a fine for the effects they had on the Willamette.

Protecting the river and our local environment is important to me, but I don't support the EPA's current cleanup plan for the Willamette that will involve extensive dredging of the river bottom. First of all, when you do something this disruptive to the river, it wipes out the fish. It wipes out everything. Why mess with things that have been covered over by the river itself and healed? The earth is pretty much self-healing.

Because I know how important the Willamette is to Portland's overall economy, I am most concerned about the negative economic effects such a plan will have. The EPA says the work will go on for maybe seven years, but my experience of government makes me think it will take much longer, and be more expensive than they are estimating now. Even if they are only dredging part of the river, it will shut down commerce. It will shut down the use of pleasure craft and fishing. It will affect businesses along the waterfront. I know that I will not be going back to the shops and restaurants there if it becomes a years-long construction zone. Those businesses that get the contracts for this project will be the only ones who benefit from it. The rest of us will suffer.

Businesses are already leaving Portland because of the high tax rates. We are one of the worst taxed states in the nation for businesses. The EPA plan will mean even higher taxes. Individuals will be negatively affected too. I'm retired and on a relatively fixed income. I am afraid this plan will mean higher property taxes. That will mean less money for food, less money to spend on the gas and power bills that keep going up, less money for clothing, for transportation, for everything.

If we're going to spend money here, it needs to be spent on things like improving the roads, hiring on more police officers, and staffing the fire department. The EPA's plan is not something Portland businesses or residents want or need. Leave the Willamette alone to continue healing itself and let Portland spend money on the many other things that really need to be fixed right now.

Sincerely,

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